Bureaucracy in School Administration: A Grounded Theory Study

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Abstract

This study proposes a model for an effective bureaucratic structure in school administration based on its interaction with Weberian bureaucracy. A qualitative research method and grounded theory design were employed. Twenty-seven school administrators participated in the study. Descriptive and content analysis were employed. 3-stage coding was used for analysis. Bureaucracy contributes to school administration by maintaining the work in order, recognising fields of expertise, providing a common language by carrying out the job in an official manner and being a tool in overcoming problems. However, it slows down the work/progress by bringing about unfair practices and causing formalism and waste. When Weberian bureaucracy's dimensions are examined in the context of school administration, 4 out of 6 - a division of labour, rules and regulations, authority hierarchy and rational behaviour - continue functioning. However, problems in school administration regarding specialization and merit are seen. An effective bureaucratic structure in school administration should consider employees and the school. To implement an effective and efficient bureaucracy in school administration, all dimensions of Weberian bureaucracy must be regarded based on the balance of responsibility and delegation of authority. Additionally, organizational and individual dimensions should be taken into account.

Keywords: school administration, Weberian bureaucracy, grounded theory, bureaucratic model

Okul Yönetiminde Bürokrasi: Bir Gömülü Teori Çalışması

Özet

Bu çalışmada amaç, okul yönetimi Weberyan bürokrasi etkileşiminden hareketle okul yönetiminde etkili bir bürokratik yönetim yapısına yönelik bir model ortaya koymaktır. Araştırmada nitel araştırma yönteminden ve temellendirilmiş kuram deseninden yararlanılmıştır. Araştırmaya 27 okul yöneticisi katılmıştır. Araştırmada betimsel ve içerik analizi yapılmıştır. Analizde, ayrıca 3 aşamalı kodlama süreci uygulanmıştır. Bürokrasi okul yönetimine işlerin belli bir düzen içinde sürdürülmesi, uzmanlık alanını önemsemesi, işlerin resmi bir şekilde yürütülerek herkes için aynı dilin konuşulmasına imkân vermesi, problemlerin üstesinden gelmede bir araç olması bakımından katkı sağlamaktadır. Diğer yandan adaletsiz uygulamaları beraberinde getirmesi, şekilciliğe ve israfa sebebiyet vermesi nedeniyle işlerin yavaşlamasına, zorlukla ilerlemesine neden olmaktadır. Weberyan bürokrasinin boyutları okul yönetimi bağlamında incelendiğinde, 6 boyuttan 4 tanesinin –iş bölümü, kurallar ve düzenlemeler, otorite hiyerarşisi ve rasyonel davranma- okul yönetiminde işlevini sürdürmektedir. Ancak uzmanlaşma ve liyakat konusunda ise okul yönetiminde problemler yaşandığı anlaşılmaktadır. Okul yönetiminde etkili bir bürokratik yapı açısından hem iş göreni hem de okulu dikkate alan bir yapı gerekmektedir. Okul yönetiminde etkili ve verimli bir bürokrasinin uygulanması için yetki-sorumluluk dengesi ve yetki devrine dayalı olarak Weberyan bürokrasinin tüm boyutlarıyla dikkate alınması gerekmektedir. Ayrıca örgütsel ve bireysel boyutlar göz önünde bulundurulmalıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: okul yönetimi, Weberyan bürokrasisi, gömülü teori, bürokratik model

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Introduction

Bureaucracy that was scientifically studied and formulated by German social scientist Max Weber (1864-1920) encompasses administrative, social, and political aspects (Eryılmaz, 2013; Haveman, 2013). It is derived from the words bureau and cratie and refers to a system based on the exercise of authority by bureaus (Tortop et al., 1999). Bureaucracy has two different effects on organizations (Labaree, 2020; Racko, 2017; Smith & Larimer, 2004). Some studies suggest that bureaucracy brings rigidity to the organization, is far from meeting needs, leads to a strict hierarchy, centralization of authority, conflicts between administrative and expertise powers, strict rules, and limiting discretion (Li & Wang, 2021; Robinson, 2015; Sünnetçioğlu, 2019; Şahin, 1998). Other studies reveal that it has a structured nature that guides organized and regular work (Balıkçı, 2016; Haveman, 2013; Labaree, 2020).

One of the areas where bureaucracy affects organizations is schools and school administration. Since school principals have bureaucratic duties such as finance, personnel, health, and safety (Fullan, 2008), the bureaucratic structure of schools should be taken into consideration considered to ensure the effectiveness of schools (Koç, 2020). Bureaucratic procedures (routine tasks) and hierarchy facilitate educational activities and increase efficiency in schools. This decreases conflicts while increasing cooperation among teachers (Hoy & Sweetland, 2000). However, neglecting the human element is bureaucracy's negative aspect (Çevikbaş, 2014). This negative aspect can be eliminated by giving more consideration to the human aspect in schools (Macpherson & Hyung, 2015).

Developing countries need professional, disciplined, motivated, honest, politically neutral and effective managers in every field (Asaju & Ayeni, 2021). At schools, school administrators are expected to demonstrate the specified characteristics since they can produce solutions to problems with their role model behavior while performing their duties (Roch & Pitts, 2012). For solving problems, school administrators should familiarize with their workplace by collaborating with the environment. The familiarization will also affect the administration structure at the school (Roch & Edwards, 2017). Since school administrators have a wide variety of stakeholders and jobs to take care of, such as teachers, students, families and senior administration (Lortie, 2009).

The attitude of school administrators and the administration structure in the school are important in understanding the impact of bureaucracy on the school. The school administrator can also handle the bureaucratic structure in a way that contributes to the school with his behavior (Öngel, 2019). Autonomy of teachers can be shown as one of these contributions. The bureaucratic structure in schools is supportive of teachers' autonomy. Bureaucracy can contribute to teachers' performance in their duties (Erbek, 2023). However, although there are studies on bureaucracy, there is a need to create up-to-date and effective models of it. Creating new bureaucratic models will bring about an understanding of administratior behaviors (Chang, 2022). In addition, the negativities that have emerged in bureaucracy over time - being a means of hindering, prolonging the time it takes to get things done, making it difficult to take initiative, etc. - show that new models are needed. For the new models, a flexible and participatory structure is highlighted (Açıkgöz, 2023).

School Administration in Türkiye

School administration is where the field of administration meets schools, and school administrators are the ones who execute this task (Bursalıoğlu, 2000). They are responsible for a range of tasks, including bureaucratic duties within the education system. The bureaucratic

structure of schools affects all stakeholders, especially teachers (Parlar & Cansoy, 2017). School administrators have various responsibilities including academic promotion, administration, meeting community expectations, creating an educational environment, and facilitating teacher development (Espuny et al., 2020; Oplatka, 2017; Liu et al., 2015). Effective collaboration between administrators is critical for ensuring optimal school administration and achieving the desired outcomes (Cansoy et al., 2021; Wong, 2009).

Bureaucratic tasks constitute a significant portion of the tasks carried out by school administrators in Türkiye, amounting to 29.48% (Ceylan et al., 2020). The Ministry of National Education (MoNE) is responsible for organizing school administration in the Turkish education system through legal texts. These legal texts specify selection criteria, procedures, principles, and duties for school administrators. The duties, authorities, and responsibilities of school administrators pertain to educational activities, bureaucratic procedures, infrastructure development, and resource utilization. In its strategic plan and 2023 education vision, MoNE also emphasizes that school administration should be a field of expertise, the training needs of school administrators should be met, and a planned administration approach should dominate school administration (MoNE, 2013; 2014; 2018; 2019; 2021). In addition to these documents, National Education Councils and Development Plans are considered in determining school administration policies. The 20th National Education Council addressed professionalization and status of school administration, while the 11th Development Plan aimed to increase motivation, provide training, make legal arrangements, and establish a school development model (MoNE, 2021; Strategy Budget Presidency, 2019).

Conceptual Framework and Theoretical Perspective

Bureaucracy has a significant impact on social life (Çevikbaş, 2014). It is a method of administrative organization that relies on strict adherence to detailed rules and regulations set by higher authorities (Mises, 2010). Bureaucracy has multiple meanings, such as administration, disease, a form of organization, and a group of experts who implements decisions (Öztaş, 2019). Bureaucracy, which Weber declared to be the means of rationalization and the way of organizing the organization and society, is called the ideal type of administration style (Byrkjeflot, 2018; Özkaral, 2020; Öztaş, 2019). The Weberian Bureaucracy model is based on rules, non-dependence on individuals, hierarchical order, written documents and filing, staff specialized in their duties, and employees working at full capacity (Weber, 2012). Bureaucracy has technical benefits compared to other organizational forms, as it brings rationality and efficiency to the organization (Eryılmaz, 2013; Mouzelis, 2001; Weber, 2014). The characteristic features (dimensions) of bureaucracy are as follows: (i) Division of labor: The distribution of official tasks among employees in accordance with the rules in line with the objectives of the organization. (ii) Rules and regulations: Regulations based on formal spheres of authority established by legal texts. (iii) Hierarchy: A level based system where the upper level can control the lower level. (iv) Rationality (acting rationally): The separation of official affairs from private life. (v) Specialization: Training according to the work performed and the qualified employees working in the organization. (vi) Merit: It is based on employing people who are suitable for the rules and qualifications of the relevant task (Eryılmaz, 2013; Haveman, 2013; Hoy & Miskel, 2010; Mises, 2010; Mouzelis, 2001; Weber, 2012; 2014).

Bureaucracy still maintains its effectiveness and validity in school administration (Joo & Kim, 2022). Understanding how bureaucracy affects schools, it is essential to examine its implementation in the educational setting (Pekince Kardaş, 2019). Figure 1 presents the implementation of bureaucracy in schools.

Formalization

	Enabling	Coercive
Enabling	Enabling Bureaucracy	Rule-bound Bureaucracy
Centralization		
Hindering	Hierarchical Bureaucracy	Hindering Bureaucracy

Figure 1. A typology of school bureaucracy (Hoy & Sweetland, 2000)

Based on Figure 1, bureaucracy in schools can have varying effects, depending on formality and centralization. The school administrator plays a critical role in determining if it is facilitative or obstructive. They interact with bureaucracy due to their authority (Honingh & Hooge, 2009). They are responsible for bureaucratic tasks such as school infrastructure, personnel issues, and professional development (Bush & Oduro, 2006), but they should also consider human values and expectations when implementing bureaucratic procedures (Abun et al., 2013; Khan, 2020), as bureaucracy is perceived as a hindrance to achieving organizational goals by school staff (Labaree, 2020). Moreover, it is important to consider the perspectives of bureaucrats in the interaction between bureaucracy and school administration, as ignoring their views may lead to resistance to organizational reforms (Cabral et al., 2019; Kim & Han, 2015; Wong & Sunderman, 2001).

Numerous studies have explored the impact of Weberian bureaucracy on both schools and organizations, yielding varying results (Akçakaya, 2016; Çevikbaş, 2014; Olsen, 2005). Additionally, research has focused on the interaction between bureaucracy and organizations across various countries, including Türkiye and South Korea (Gülsoy Kerimoğlu, 2019; Sünnetçioğlu, 2019), South Korea (Kim & Han, 2015), Portugal (Espuny et al., 2020), the USA (Bohte, 2001), Malaysia (Kean et al., 2017), Austria (Keddie & Holloway, 2020), New Zealand (Fitzgerald et al., 2003), Sweden (Sandström et al., 2019), China, and Russia (Li & Wang, 2021). These studies suggest that bureaucracy must be reviewed in light of new regulations (Höpfl, 2006) while acknowledging that it may have differing effects on organizations and countries (Racko, 2017). Previous literature has reported some dimensions of Weberian Bureaucracy such as specialization (Cho et al., 2013), hierarchy (Clegg, 2012; Höpfl, 2006), rules and regulations (Akıl & Karaman, 2004; Ceylan et al., 2020; Macpherson & Hyung, 2015), and rational behavior and procedures (Olsen, 2005). However, no research to date has encompassed all dimensions of Weberian Bureaucracy. Furthermore, while there have been studies examining bureaucracy within the context of the school administration (Balıkçı, 2016; Gönüllü, 2009; Koç, 2020; Ömeroğlu, 2006; Parlar & Cansoy, 2017; Pekince Kardaş, 2019; Sünnetçioğlu, 2019; Yılmaz & Beycioğlu, 2017), a comprehensive investigation of Weberian Bureaucracy and its various dimensions in school administration is lacking. In addition, when looking at the literature, it is seen that bureaucracy interacts with school administration and the interaction includes both positive and negative aspects (Balıkçı, 2016; Joo & Kim, 2022; Samur

et al., 2022; Yalçın et al., 2020; Yılmaz & Beycioğlu, 2017). However, the bureaucracy-school administration interaction needs to be investigated in all its dimensions (Bohte, 2001). While school administration was discussed from a bureaucratic perspective in the research, a Weberian Approach was taken for the following reasons. Weberian Bureaucracy is described as a widespread, systematic and ideal organizational structure (Byrkjeflot, 2018; Civek & Özkahveci, 2021). In addition, the data obtained generally points to the dimensions of Weberian Bureaucracy theory. In addition, it can be said that the researcher's familiarity with the theory, as he uses the Weberian Bureaucracy approach in his academic studies, and the fact that he has worked closely with all dimensions of the Weberian bureaucracy during his 8 years as a school administrator, are the determining factors for the research.

A proposal for eliminating or minimizing the negativities caused by bureaucracy in schools needs to be made. For creating such a proposal, the opinions of school principals (Gönüllü, 2009; Ömeroğlu, 2006) and other employees of the school, such as deputy principals, should be taken into account (Dönder, 2006; Saygı, 2009). In addition, the concept of hierarchy, compliance with the rules, merit and tasking should be reviewed in Türkiye's conditions (Gönüllü, 2009). In order to unravel all these, by utilizing different research methods such as qualitative research alongside quantitative methods (Önal, 2012); the reflection of bureaucracy on areas such as school administration can be investigated based on different bureaucratic theories such as Weberian Bureaucracy (Balıkçı, 2016). In this research, acquired by using different methods, the suggestions of the mentioned studies regarding the inclusion of school administrators who experience bureaucracy at school were taken into consideration. In addition, the researcher thinks that the research should not be directly aimed at school administration and that the research should be based on current data. Finally, it raises the opinion that it is more appropriate to conduct the research by taking into account the researcher's supervision and experiences as a school administrator and the Weberian Bureaucracy. All these reasons reveal that the school administration-bureaucracy relationship should be investigated in the context of Weberian Bureaucracy. The research should investigate (i) Weberian Bureaucracy with all its dimensions both separately and as a whole, (ii) Weberian Bureaucracy in the context of school administration, with a particular emphasis on the Turkish education system and (iii) how an effective bureaucratic structure should be designed for school administration by taking into account various aspects of bureaucracy.

This study aims to establish a theoretical framework for a proficient bureaucratic administration system in school administration by exploring the interaction between school administration and Weberian Bureaucracy. To achieve this, the research seeks to answer the following questions:
1- How do school administrators perceive bureaucracy?
2- How is Weberian Bureaucracy manifested in school administration?
3- How can a competent bureaucratic structure be established in school administration?

Method

The researcher's experience in school administration - 8 years - naturally required him to be in touch with bureaucracy. In addition, meetings with other school administrators regarding them work done required keeping the bureaucratic structure on the agenda. The researcher's

bureaucracy experiences and interviews with school administrators in various environments - both formal and informal - led to the emergence of the idea that the bureaucratic understanding and theory should be revised taking into account today's conditions. In addition, the fact that the researcher focused on bureaucracy in his research and used the qualitative research method in most of his research led to the conclusion that it would be appropriate to employ the qualitative research method and grounded theory for the current research. Looking at the literature, grounded theory, which is one of the qualitative research designs, is used to either produce a certain theory or to review an existing theory (Creswell, 2016; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Merriam, 2015; Özden, 2016; Urquhart, 2018). In this research, grounded theory was preferred since the purpose was to review the Weberian Bureaucracy in the context of school administration.

Participants

A total of 27 administrators, including 14 school principals and 13 deputy principals, working in schools from different educational levels - pre-school, primary school, secondary school and high school - participated in the research. When the literature for the selected method is examined, two points draw attention. The first is that there is no specific number for the number of participants in qualitative research and collecting enough data is sufficient for the research (Merriam, 2015; Patton, 2014). Secondly, for the grounded theory, the number of required interviews is 20-60 (Creswell, 2016). Since the research meets the stated criteria, the researcher thinks that the number of participants is sufficient.

Participants' academic background mostly consists of social sciences. Since the bureaucracy experience of the participants is considered important, school administrators who have worked as school administrators for at least 5 years were included in the research. Therefore, maximum variation and criterion sampling were used in the research (Miles & Huberman, 2015). It is also noteworthy that the participants are experienced in teaching profession as well. Data about the participants is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Participant group

Gender	Female 6		Male 21	
Graduation level	Bachelor 23		Master 4	
Age	30-40 10	41-50 9	51 and over 8	
Duty	School Principal 14		Vice Principal 13	
Branch	Social Sciences 19	Natural Sciences 4	Special Education 4	
School Type	Pre-School 1	Primary School 8	Middle School 13	High School 5
Term in Office as School Administrator	0-5 years 5	6-11 years 15	12-17 years 7	
Term in Office as Teacher	12-17 years 10	18-23 years 14	24 and above 3	

Data Collection

The research employed a semi-structured interview format to collect data, which focused on participants' perceptions of bureaucracy, the dimensions of Weberian Bureaucracy, and their recommendations for an effective bureaucratic structure. The semi-structured interview form used to collect data consists of two parts. The first section contains information about the participants' gender, age, education level, position, field, school type, and the duration of their tenure as teachers and school administrators (Table 1). In the second part, questions were asked about the bureaucracy-school administration interaction, the functioning and impact of Weberian Bureaucracy in school administration, and the participants' suggestions regarding an effective bureaucratic structure, through 5 main and 15 final questions. Thus, the Weberian Bureaucracy-school administration interaction was examined. Data collection was deemed adequate with 27 participants, as responses sufficiently addressed the research objectives. Participants' permission was obtained pre study and data analysis stages. Institutional permissions were also obtained. The interviews were recorded, and the analyses were conducted based on the confirmed data provided by the participants. To protect participants' privacy, pseudonyms (e.g., SA1, SA2) were used.

Data Analysis

The study used Glaser and Strauss' 3-stage coding process to analyze the data: open coding, selective coding and theoretical coding (Christensen et al., 2015; Neuman, 2010). First, open coding was employed to identify similar and different aspects of participants' views on bureaucracy, which led to the identification of dimensions of Weberian Bureaucracy in schools. As a result of this coding, one category, two subcategories and eight codes were obtained (Table 1). Second, selective coding was conducted to compare the research data with Weberian Bureaucracy, revealing functional and non-functional aspects. As a result of this coding, the researcher concluded that there were problems in the implementation of the two dimensions of Weberian bureaucracy - specialization and merit (Figure 1). Finally, theoretical coding was conducted to identify how an effective bureaucratic structure should be in schools. As a result of this coding, a model based on the responsibilities of employees, the school, and both the employees and the school has emerged for the effective implementation of bureaucracy in

school administration (Figure 2). Content analysis was used to extract systematic and in-depth meanings from the data (Krippendorff, 2004). The content analysis in this research is shown in Table 1 and Figure 1-2. In addition, descriptive analysis was employed to put forward participants' insights in a meaningful way (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). The descriptive analysis was implemented by directly quoting participants' insights in their respective places in the findings section.

In the validity and reliability phase of the research, participant verification, appropriate and sufficient participation in data collection, expert review, rich description and maximum diversity strategies were applied (Christensen et al., 2015; Merriam, 2015). These strategies are reflected in the research as follows:
* Participant verification: With the permission of the participants, opinions were recorded with a voice recorder. After the recordings were transcribed, the transcripts were sent to the participants before analysis. In line with the feedback from the participants, the data analysis phase started.
* Appropriate and sufficient participation in data collection: 27 school administrators participated in the research. Due to the many similarities in participants' answers, the researcher considers the participation of 27 participants in the research sufficient. There is no specific number for the number of participants in qualitative research and collecting enough data is the actual criterion (Merriam, 2015; Patton, 2014). Secondly, for grounded theory, the number of interviews is in the range of 20-60 (Creswell, 2016).
* Expert review: Throughout the research process, the opinions of two researchers with studies in the field and who have used the qualitative method in their research were taken into consideration. The 3-stage coding process in the analysis of the data (Christensen et al., 2015; Neuman, 2010) was reviewed with the support of these two experts.
* Rich description: Among the data transcribed, those relevant to the subject are given in the findings and comments section as a basis for comments when appropriate. Thus, the researcher made comments based on the direct transfer of participant opinions.
* Maximum diversity: Pre-school, primary school, middle school and high school administrators were included in the research in order to investigate Weberian Bureaucracy in the context of different school types and to create a model that encompasses different school types. Thus, the researcher took care to ensure maximum diversity (Miles & Huberman, 2015).

Findings

The perspectives of school administrators highlight three key areas: (i) Understanding of bureaucracy according to school administrators, (ii) functioning of Weberian Bureaucracy in school administration, and (iii) an effective bureaucratic structure in school administration.

Understanding of Bureaucracy according to School Administrators

School administrators' views on bureaucracy basically point to two aspects. First, bureaucracy contributes to the functioning of the school by (i) providing a hierarchical order, (ii) and expert staff, (iii) formalizing the functioning through legal texts, and (iv) being an organizational tool for maintaining order and overcoming problems. These data show that school administrators agree with 4 of the 6 dimensions of Weberian Bureaucracy (hierarchy, expertise, official rules, and written documents).

> *"Officially, bureaucracy is an organization that has a hierarchical structure with expert staff and is bound by official rules."* (SA1)

"How things work. How official affairs are carried out. Subordinate-superior relations, the system." (SA3)

"The aim of bureaucracy should be to solve the problems of those at the upper level and pave the way for them to do better quality work." (SA6)

The other view on bureaucracy asserts that it hinders and complicates the work conducted within schools. This is often attributed to four key factors: (i) an overreliance on paperwork and formal procedures, (ii) serving as a source of difficulty rather than support, (iii) prioritizing personal relationships over rational action, and (iv) impeding progress by causing delays in the execution of tasks.

"For me, bureaucracy means cumbersomeness, slowness, heaviness." (SA4)

"...when a document is missing at the point of inspection or evaluation, negative sides are seen, not positive sides…" (SA5)

"It is necessary to free the bureaucracy from paperwork." (SA12)

"…sometimes it can make things difficult, or people can use bureaucracy according to their own views." (SA14)

The perceptions suggest a coexistence of conflicting aspects of bureaucracy within the school system. The researcher argues that this duality represents a significant hindrance to the effectiveness of the school and underscores the challenges encountered in school administration. Notably, the school administrators' perspectives on bureaucracy reveal both its beneficial and burdensome aspects. This apparent paradox underscores the complex and multifaceted impact of bureaucracy on school administration. The administrators referred to the positive aspects of bureaucracy 45 times, while the negative aspects were mentioned 31 times, indicating a greater prevalence of beneficial impacts (shown in Table 1).

Table 1. Bureaucracy according to school administrators

Category	Sub-category	Code	Frequency
Meaning of Bureaucracy	Contributing to the School	Expert staff	2
		Hierarchy	14
		Formalization (Legislation, functioning, institutionalization)	17
		Organizational tool (Problem solving, maintaining order)	12
	Making Things Difficult at School	Paperwork and formalism	5
		Source of difficulty	15
		Inability to behave rationally (based on personal relationships)	4
		Slow work progress (slowdown in business)	7

According to Table 1, the four dimensions of Weberian Bureaucracy continue to function in school administration and facilitate the work of school administrators. Nevertheless, there is also a dimension of bureaucracy that hinders the work of school administrators. The researcher suggests that the key factor determining the impact of bureaucracy in this context is the way it is comprehended and implemented by practitioners.

Functioning of Weberian Bureaucracy in School Administration

Division of labor: It is done within the organization through official texts. The knowledge, skills, experience, and opinions of the employees are taken into account during the process. These tasks, which are essential for the school, become routine over time.

> *"We do division of labor so that things work. If there is no division of labor, things will not work, not everyone will take responsibility."* (SA2)
> *"We make a division of labor according to everyone's interests and abilities in order to ensure that employees are motivated, organized and work in harmony."* (SA3)

Rules and regulations: According to the perspectives of school administrators, regulations and rules are formulated in adherence to legal frameworks, serving as a vital means of ensuring order and equity within schools. Leveraging written documentation and information systems such as e-school and the Ministry of National Education Information Systems (MoNEIS), these legal texts offer numerous benefits, including the ability to record work completed, establish institutional memory, and facilitate formal communication. Over time, regulations and rules have become an established and customary practice within schools.

> *"Rules and tasks assigned are all recorded."* (SA16)

> "*Words fly away, written ones remain. We continue with this understanding, and our work gets really easier. Intervening when the problem is small prevents it from growing. When I record it in writing, it is a process that protects us, the child, and the teacher."* (SA17)

Hierarchy: According to school administrators, a strictly hierarchical structure is employed for official affairs and procedures, whereas a more flexible and human-centric hierarchical structure is observed outside of such formal settings. They associated the concept of hierarchy with acknowledging the official domain of responsibility within the school.

> *"There is a hierarchy in the school. Principal, vice principal. When there is a bureaucratic environment in the school, it is applied when there is an official procedure."* (SA6)
> *"There is hierarchy, but it is not like before, it is a more flexible structure."* (SA15)

Rationality: School administrators think that they act rationally by approaching every employee equally and fairly. However, they also acknowledge that their emotions as human beings can influence their decision-making. This situation shows that there is no absolute rational behavior in schools.

> *"...acting objectively, rationally sounds nice, but we are also human. We have feelings"* (SA19)
> *"We try to act rationally. We have to stand at an equal distance to everyone."* (OY21)

Specialization: School administrators are divided in their views on whether there is specialization in school administration. While some argue that specialization is present and achieved through experience, others oppose this view. Those who support specialization argue that it requires both experience and knowledge of the task area. In the school environment, it is generally accepted that assigning tasks according to individuals' capabilities is an indication of specialization, particularly during the division of labor.

> *"I was assigned responsibility for work safety because I possess the knowledge and expertise in that field, while other colleagues were not familiar with the subject."* (SA2)
> *"We specialize, we gain experience, and we develop a different behavior when the same problem comes up, or we distinguish the most positive one over time."* (SA17)
> *"Specialization is like this: It happens as you work and live."* (SA22)

Those who oppose the notion of specialization in school administration cited the lack of such a structure as the reason for this situation. For this reason, they argued that just as education is needed for teaching, education should also be needed for school administration.

"...I think there is absolutely no specialization in national education, or there is no structure to guide you towards specialization. Those who are appointed as administrators should have a trainee period like those who are newly appointed as teachers." (SA4)

".... I think that vice principals and school administrators need some extra training about procedures, ethical issues." (SA15)

Merit: School administrators mostly agree on the merit dimension of Weberian Bureaucracy. They think that merit is not functional in school administration. The reasons are that the criteria and method of selecting school administrators are not appropriate, informal relations are determinative, thus the characteristics of the administrators usually are not suitable for this task.

"...The primary issue is the absence of merit. The bureaucracy tends to disfavor individuals who are knowledgeable and proactive in their work. The bureaucracy seeks out administrators who are not inclined to cause disruptions and who can make everything look good." (SA8)

"No administrator or teacher should be selected only by exams or only by interviews. Our schools should have teachers and administrators who have gone through process evaluation." (SA10)

"...In my experience, some of the principals I have worked with were unable to establish positive relationships with their teachers, which had a detrimental impact on teacher enthusiasm. Additionally, I observed that some of these principals struggled with organizing administrative tasks and reacted impulsively, leading me to believe that they may be incompetent." (SA23)
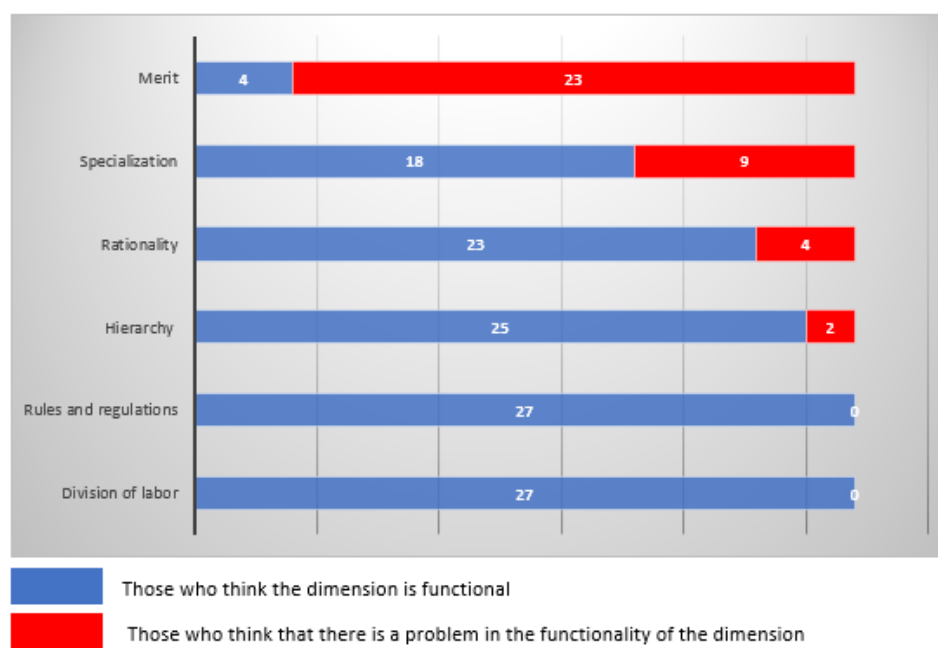

Figure 1. The functioning of Weberian Bureaucracy according to school administrators

According to Figure 1, Weberian Bureaucracy is used in school administration. There is a complete harmony in the opinions of school administrators especially regarding division of labor and rules and regulations, indicating that Weberian Bureaucracy is effectively implemented in terms of hierarchy and rational behavior. However, there may be significant challenges related to specialization and merit within school administration.

Effective Bureaucratic Structure in School Administration

School administrators propose a three-pronged approach for an effective bureaucratic structure. The first one is related to the characteristics and responsibilities expected from the employees. Administrators emphasize that their own personal attributes should be reflected in the

bureaucratic structure, such as strong communication skills, being able to take initiatives, trustworthiness, a critical perspective, and a solid educational background. The researcher contends that discussing effective school administration without considering the characteristics of school administrators is inadequate. Additionally, the cited characteristics mentioned by participants reflect fundamental approaches to school administration.

> *"... I think people are not open to criticism. Criticism improves. We need to take shape accordingly."* (SA4)
> *"...school administration can be given the opportunity to determine its own administration approach and make decisions without getting stuck in too much bureaucracy..."* (SA5)
> *"...the seminar periods can be more effective in terms of development and specialization of our teachers."* (SA16)
> *"There should be a humanitarian approach in the subordinate-superior relationship. You get the work done. Yet, there are two ways: making them do it with love or with pressure."* (SA17)
> *"Trust is very important here. Trust is ensured by the fact that when you give a job, you don't have any doubts in your mind..."* (SA22)

The second dimension is related to the characteristics and responsibilities expected from the school. These include providing a suitable and flexible work environment, supporting employees, establishing a performance-based system, prioritizing the selection of competent administrators, providing opportunities for employee growth, rewarding outstanding performance, and ensuring effective communication within the organization. The researcher asserts that organizational characteristics and responsibilities are intricately connected with individual characteristics and responsibilities in an effective bureaucratic structure. The inclusion of communication as a factor in both dimensions reinforces the researcher's perspective.

> *"...It is important to acknowledge and support positive efforts, while also taking appropriate measures when problems arise. This should be consistently applied to all schools, teachers, and administrators..."* (SA10)
> *"...the area of duty should be given... flexibility should be given regarding the area of duty. If you want something as it is, every administrator will have problems..."* (SA12)
> *"Individuality is essential. Our experiences and skills can guide us in our work and relieve us. As outlined in our vision document, we prioritize communication with all individuals..."* (SA13)
> *"... There must be a system based on performance. At the end of each year, employees at every level and in every status should be audited. They should be rewarded..."* (SA19)
> *"In my opinion, the selection of school administrators is a critical process. If merit is prioritized during the selection process, it would be a positive step forward."* (SA23)

The third dimension relates to the expected characteristics and responsibilities of both employees and the organization. This involves implementing Weberian Bureaucracy based on authority-responsibility balance and delegation of authority. School administrators believe that this approach is a suitable means of managing the human factor within the organization. They emphasize that their own wishes and expectations must be considered alongside those of the organization to maximize efficiency. For the researcher, Weberian Bureaucracy with all its dimensions should be taken as a basis in school administration. However, as noted in the first dimension, school administrators need to be more integrated into the structure. Participants suggest that this can be accomplished by striking a balance between authority, responsibility, and delegation of authority, which signals trust in school administrators.

> *"...I believe in maintaining some level of bureaucracy, but it should be limited and focused on determining general guidelines. School administrators should be given more authority and responsibility..."* (SA3)
> *"Bureaucracy should be objective. It should be implemented in the same way for everyone."* (SA10)

"...a localized administration model that gives school administrations an identity, authority and power in both financial and moral terms can help us move forward." (SA13)
"If a person or an authority is given a responsibility, they should be given equal authority." (SA19)
"I want school administrators to be empowered - authorized - in a bureaucratic sense so that they can do their jobs more easily." (SA20)

3. Dimension: Characteristics and Responsibilities expected from both Employees and the Organization
* Weberian bureaucracy
* Balance of authority and responsibility
* Delegation of authority

1. Dimension: Characteristics and Responsibilities expected from Employees
* Communication skills
* Taking initiative
* Trust
* Critical perspective
* Receiving training

2. Dimension: Characteristics and Responsibilities expected from the Organization - the School
* Appropriate and flexible working environment
* Supporting employees
* A performance-based system
* Giving importance to administrator selection
* Giving experience to employees
* Rewarding employees when necessary
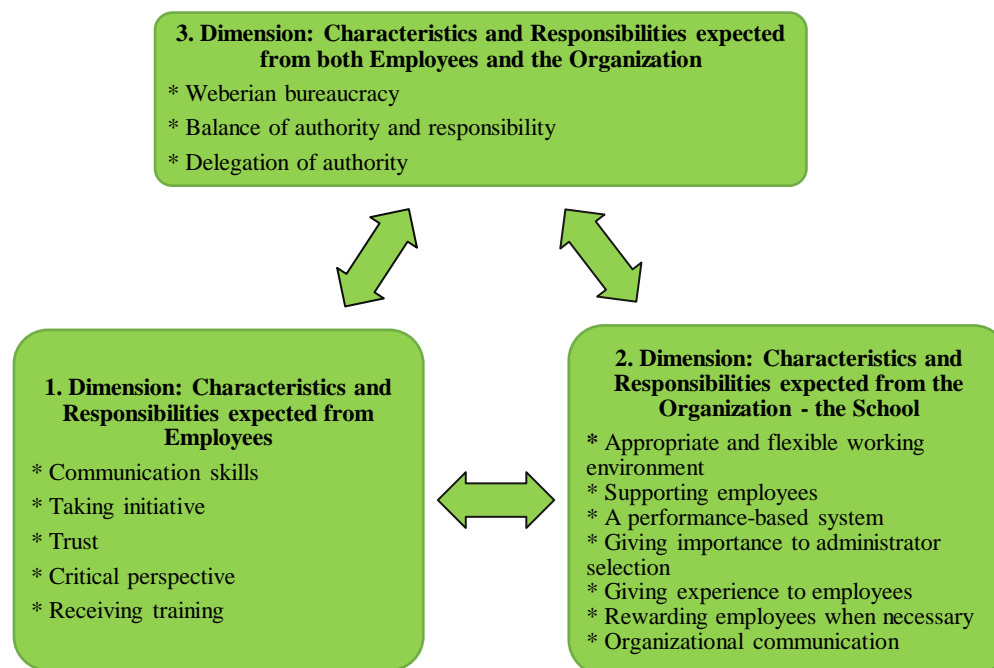* Organizational communication

Figure 2. Effective bureaucratic structure in school administration

According to Figure 2, an effective bureaucratic structure in school administration is based on three pillars: Features and responsibilities of employees, organization, and both. For the bureaucratic structure to be effective in schools, the three dimensions should work together.

Conclusion and Discussion

Bureaucracy is essentially a bridge between the state and the citizen, deeply impacting societies since its emergence and continuing to do so today (Akçakaya, 2016; Luhman, 2021). One of the areas where bureaucracy is effective is school administration, where its impact is bidirectional (Hoy & Sweetland, 2000; Racko, 2017). In the literature, bureaucracy in schools has been associated with bureaucracy as paperwork, which unnecessarily prolongs tasks (Bolay, 2009; Mises, 2010), decreasing academic achievement and hindering school development (Bohte, 2001; Smith & Larimer, 2004; Pekince Kardaş, 2019), causing stress due to dealing with many tasks (Fullan, 2008), exhibiting a centralized approach (Robinson, 2015), making tasks more difficult to complete (Li & Wang, 2021), undervaluing human resources (Khan, 2020), damaging human relationships (Aydoğan, 2020; Gönüllü, 2009; Özkaral, 2020); limiting and standardizing school administration in terms of resource utilization (Cabral, et al., 2019), and causing organizational stagnation and deviation from goals (Haveman, 2013). However, bureaucracy also has positive effects, such as increasing the technical competence of the organization (Haveman, 2013), improving success, regulating the school, and ensuring stability (Hoy & Miskel, 2010; Hoy & Sweetland, 2000; Smith & Larimer, 2004; Labaree, 2020), serious task tracking (Aydoğan, 2020), increasing teacher competency (Gönüllü, 2009), determining and distributing teacher roles and responsibilities within the hierarchical order (Kean, et al., 2017), being a tool for more efficient functioning of the school (Özkaral, 2020), and emphasizing autonomy in the curriculum (Cabral et al., 2019). As in the literature, the study

highlights two different aspects of bureaucracy, indicating that the interaction between bureaucracy and school administration continues in a strong way.

Although there are studies on the dimensions of Weberian bureaucracy, including specialization (Cho et al., 2013), hierarchy (Clegg, 2012; Höpfl, 2006), rules and regulations (Ceylan et al., 2020; Macpherson & Hyung, 2015), and rational behavior and procedures (Olsen, 2005), the human dimension is also taken into consideration for an effective bureaucratic structure, especially in schools with teachers (Fitzgerald et al., 2003; Honingh & Hooge, 2009). This is because human-based specialization affects democratic governance (Cho et al., 2013; Clegg, 2012). The current research is different from other studies in that it separately examines the dimensions of Weberian Bureaucracy in school administration. Additionally, the current research is significant in showing that the specialization and merit dimensions of Weberian Bureaucracy are not sufficiently represented at the desired level in school administration.

There is a mutual interaction between bureaucracy and schools (Löfgren et al., 2022; Ömeroğlu, 2006). In a school that is administrated with contemporary methods, bureaucracy should be a factor that increases collaboration, motivation, and participatory administration. Otherwise, it will have a negative impact on the working peace in the school (Yılmaz & Beycioğlu, 2017). Moreover, as the influence of bureaucratic administration increases, there will be changes that work against the organization and employees. To ensure an effective administration, the needs and expectations of employees should be taken into consideration (Abun et al., 2013). In addition, an administration style based on maximizing organizational justice and motivation (Alanoğlu & Karabatak, 2020), shared leadership (Oplatka, 2017), cooperation and communication (Espuny et al., 2020), flexibility (Sandström et al., 2019), transparency, governance understanding, accountability (Eryılmaz, 2013) and one that takes the wishes and capacities in the distribution of tasks into consideration (Kean et al., 2017) should be developed. The principles identified in the literature to effectively manage a bureaucratic structure support the findings of the current research. However, the research is noteworthy that it demonstrates a Weberian Bureaucracy that takes into account the human dimension, including the authority-responsibility and delegation of authority, will be an effective structure for school administration, which considers both employees and the organization.

Based on the study, bureaucracy has two aspects in school administration. On one hand, bureaucracy contributes to school administration by maintaining order in the workplace, emphasizing expertise, establishing a common language through official procedures, and serving as a tool for problem-solving. On the other hand, it can also cause delays and difficulties by promoting unfair practices, formalism, and wastefulness. The researcher suggests that having both aspects of bureaucracy in schools can reduce the effectiveness of school administration. Based on the analyses, it can be concluded that four out of the six dimensions (division of labor, rules and regulations, hierarchy of authority, and rational behavior) remain functional. However, challenges related to specialization and merit persists within school administration.

An effective bureaucratic structure in school administration should prioritize both the well-being of employees and the success of the school. To achieve this, a Weberian Bureaucratic structure that balances authority delegation and responsibility should be implemented. The administrative structure of the school should give employees more initiative and empowerment to improve their performance. In addition to the impact of bureaucracy on public administration (Olsen, 2005), there is a need for more research on the impact of bureaucracy on school administration (Löfgren et al., 2022). This research can guide educational administration policymakers. The findings of this study indicate that the specialization and merit dimension of

bureaucracy needs to be revised to create a more effective bureaucratic structure in school administration. School administrators should also be given more consideration in developing bureaucratic structures that account for the needs of employees. Since this study is based on the Turkish education system, further research can be conducted in other countries to compare and contrast different bureaucratic structures. Additionally, analyzing the relationship between bureaucracy and school administration using different methods can provide a more comprehensive understanding of their interaction.

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